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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents a series of worksheets to assist in the development and implementation of a well integrated set of policies for gifted/talented programs. Each worksheet covers an issue to be considered in policy development, with blank space allotted for specifying positive and negative points, a suggested policy, needs, and a timeline. Issues include: (1) identifying and placing under-represented minority students in gifted/talented programs, (2) articulating curriculum for gifted/talented students, (3) developing grading practices that do not discriminate against gifted/talented students, (4) deferring the differentiated curriculum in favor of the regular curriculum, (5) providing comprehensive programming, (6) using off-grade-level textbooks and resources, (7) training teachers to teach gifted/talented students, (8) assigning teachers for the program, (9) dismissing or removing students from the program, (10) obtaining high school or college credit for advanced courses taken at other institutions, (11) providing a continuous and accessible identification process, (12) discriminating against underachievers, (13) punishing students for participation in "pull-out" classes of a gifted/talented program, (14) assigning homework for students, and (15) overscheduling students. (PB)

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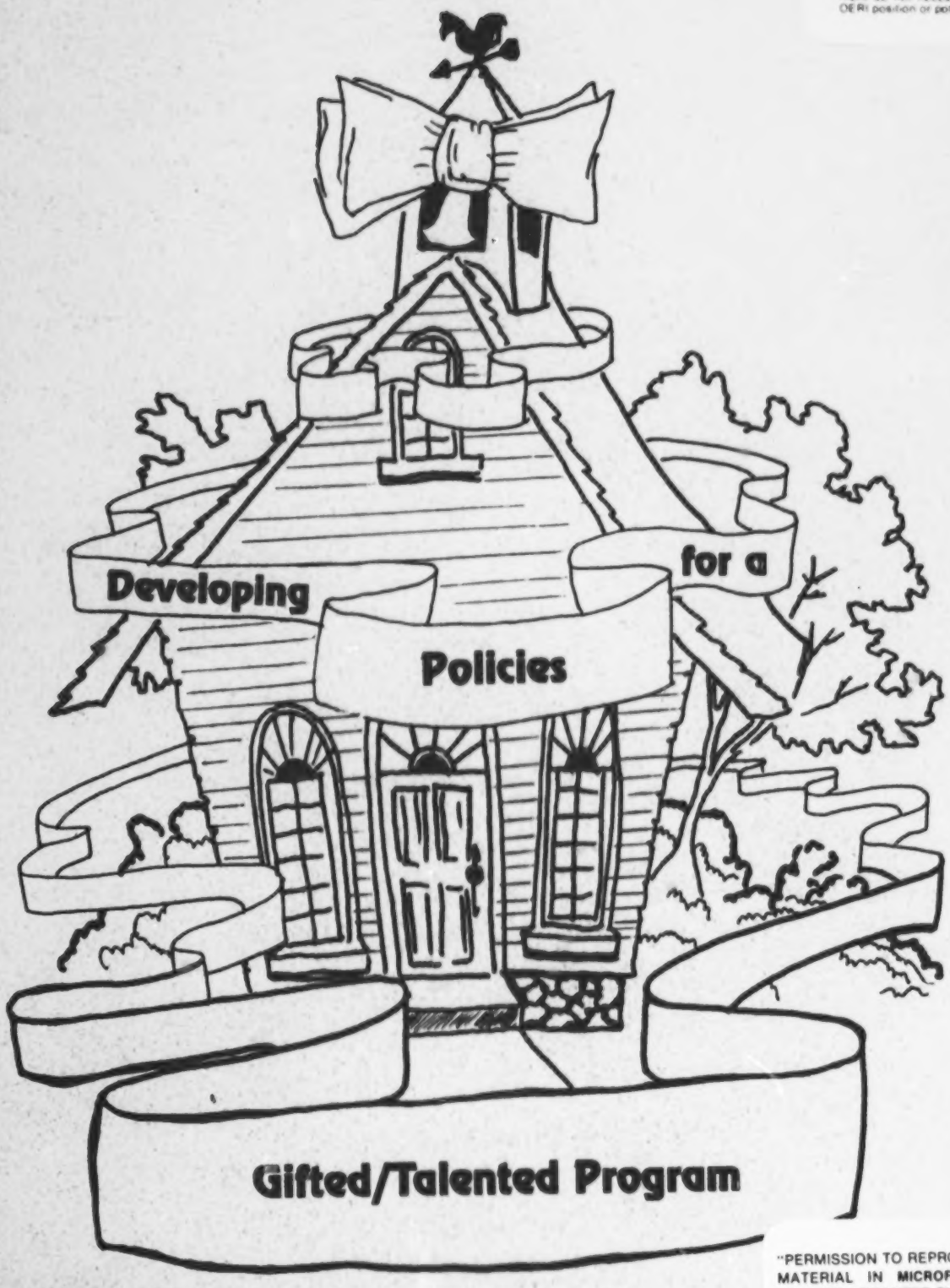

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Developing Policies for a Gifted/Talented Program

A Handbook

California Association for the Gifted, 1989

Background

The development and production of this handbook is a consequence of concerns regarding the rights of gifted and talented students expressed by educators and parents. It was believed that these concerns could be resolved most effectively by the formation of educational policies and procedures. CAG convened a day-long seminar to enable educators and parents to discuss the nature and value of various policies affecting gifted education. The thinking of and suggestions from this group are reflected in this handbook.

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PREFACE

The purpose of this document is to provide those involved in the education of the gifted/talented with a handbook that addresses significant issues known to hamper progress and decision-making relevant to gifted programs. Guidelines to confront these issues through dialogue, decision-making, and planning are provided. This resource should be used to reconcile differences that exist between what we believe should be provided to the gifted/talented and what is actually included within educational programs for these students.

Users of this handbook are free to make copies of the pages as needed to facilitate their planning.

Developing Policies for a Gifted/Talented Program

INTRODUCTION

A successful gifted/talented program must become an integral part of, rather than an adjunct to, other programs in the school district. One way to reach this goal is to develop policies that govern gifted/talented programs. In public agencies policies may be called laws, statutes, regulations, or guidelines. They are formal and generalized decision rules. Policies can apply to large numbers of individuals and become codified. The process of developing policies is analogous to problem solving. It is a means by which educators can identify the problem, discuss various alternative solutions, and reach resolution. In order to begin to formulate a policy, practical considerations and the political climate affecting each problem needs to be investigated.

If there is a proper way for a program to function and if there is some doubt that this is occurring, it may be desirable to formulate a policy or a general uniform decision rule. Once these policies are formalized, known and disseminated, they provide the basis for the actions and decisions of educators and parents. They can be used to avoid doing something as well as to ensure that something be done. Useless policies clutter the administrative landscape and can impede what individuals and agencies want to accomplish. On the other hand, useful and appropriate policies can provide assurances for teachers, parents and students.

To gain sufficient consensus to enact a policy, the policy must be general. To be effective, a policy cannot be regarded as sacred. Policy enactment occurs in incremental stages. It consists of repeated efforts to develop a constituency to support the policy, inform those who will administer it, and create an awareness in those who will derive benefit from it. The manner in which policy is written is important. Poorly written policy is difficult to implement because it does not win wide acceptance. Policy must be shaped within a context. It requires an appropriate emotional climate to nourish it – an environment that acknowledges the policy and is responsive to it.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

Each page has been designed to stimulate the development of policies that affect the quality and continuation of gifted/talented programs. The goal of policy development is to formalize and institutionalize such programs.

Following are the steps to develop policies for a gifted program.

1. The Issue *Presentation of a concern that affects gifted/talented students or the gifted/talented programs and requires translation into a policy.*

2. Some Thoughts *Consideration of background information related to the issue. This includes ideas used to stimulate further discussion of the dimensions and ramifications of the issue to be developed into a policy.*

3. Implications	
Positive	**Negative**

Investigation of the positive and negative features that affect the issue and possible policy from a variety of perspectives or points of view.

4. Suggested Policy

Specification of a policy that emerges from discussions.
Relationship of policy to original issue under consideration.

5. Needs

Definition of organizational and personnel factors that could inhibit and/or facilitate the submission and acceptance of the formulated policy as part of the school's or district's philosophy or procedures.

6. Timeline		
Person Responsible	**Task**	**Date**

Designation of how and when the policy can be implemented.

Sample Page

Following is a sample of a page completed to illustrate how a policy related to an issue can be developed.

1. The Issue

Articulating curriculum for gifted/talented students.

2. Some Thoughts

Sometimes the demand to initiate a gifted/talented program results in the development of curricula without concern for possible redundancies or the maturational needs of students.

The construction and use of a scope and sequence for a differentiated curriculum facilitates articulation within and among various grade levels and educational programs. A scope and sequence defines what and when particular content, process, product, and affect understandings and skills could be introduced, practiced, and/or mastered. Most importantly, a scope and sequence specifies differentiated learnings for gifted/talented students at various times and levels. This prevents the occurrence of disjointed and fragmented curricular experiences.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative
A scope and sequence could regulate the types of resources purchased for the gifted/talented program and the effective distribution of such resources to teachers in other than a random manner.	A scope and sequence might be perceived as a means to prescribe curriculum. If students aren't perceived to be at the appropriate level, they might be labeled as underachievers.

4. Suggested Policy

A scope and sequence will be developed K-12 to articulate the content, process, product, and affective understandings and skills across subjects in order to define a comprehensive differentiated curriculum for gifted students.

5. Needs

- Include central office subject matter specialists
- Convince educators across grade levels and subject areas or disciplines
- Use the regular or core curriculum scope and sequence as a reference

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date
Coordinator of the gifted	Present scope and sequence to Curriculum Cabinet	October
Lead teachers of the gifted	Present scope and sequence to regular classroom teachers	December

1. The Issue	**Identifying and placing under-represented minority students in gifted/talented programs.**
2. Some Thoughts	There is concern that gifted/talented education for minority students is an attempt to make these students into majority individuals. Applying the concept of "appropriate services" to gifted/talented education could benefit minority students. Using this concept, the minority gifted student is not expected to fit into a predetermined gifted/talented program; however, students are identified by a recognizable need for a service defined as part of a gifted/talented program. There is an apparent need to develop readiness or transition programs for disadvantaged students that prepare them to participate successfully in a gifted/talented program. Such programs help students to achieve the academic and social comfort necessary to be a successful participant in a gifted/talented program.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue	**Articulating curriculum for gifted/talented students.**
2. Some Thoughts	Sometimes the demand to initiate a gifted/talented program results in the development of curricula without concern for possible redundancies or the maturational needs of students. The construction and use of a scope and sequence for a differentiated curriculum facilitates articulation within and among various grade levels and educational programs. A scope and sequence defines what and when particular content, process, product, and affect understandings and skills could be introduced, practiced, and/or mastered. Most importantly, a scope and sequence specifies differentiated learnings for gifted/talented students at various times and levels. This prevents the occurrence of disjointed and fragmented curricular experiences.

3. Implications	
Positive	**Negative**

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline		
Person Responsible	**Task**	**Date**

1. The Issue	**Grading practices should not discriminate against gifted/ talented students.**
2. Some Thoughts	A differentiated curriculum appropriately planned for the gifted/ talented often results in unfair expectations for these students. In many instances, the rigor of the curriculum is associated with a more rigorous grading system. Consequently, gifted/talented students feel penalized for their participation in a program with a differentiated curriculum and opt to be excluded. They do not wish to jeopardize their grade-point average or work harder for the grades they receive. A school district needs to apply a consistent set of values and procedures to govern grading practices for the gifted/talented. The use of weighted grades within the gifted/talented program is often regarded as an means to establish an equitable grading system.

3. Implications	
Positive	**Negative**

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline		
Person Responsible	**Task**	**Date**

1. The Issue	**Deferring the differentiated curriculum in favor of the regular or basic curriculum.**
2. Some Thoughts	Often the regular or basic curriculum is perceived as more important than the differentiated curriculum. Students are expected to demonstrate mastery of all the regular or basic curriculum before they are believed to be ready for a differentiated curriculum. The differentiated curriculum should be taught parallel to or integrated with the regular or basic curriculum. Educators of the gifted/talented have a responsibility to find ways by which gifted/talented students can participate successfully in both a differentiated and regular curriculum and methods by which these curricula can be related meaningfully for these students.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue	**Providing comprehensive programming for gifted/talented students grades K-12.**
2. Some Thoughts	The designation of a gifted/talented program for some grades and not for others is often arbitrary and without adequate data to support such a decision. A goal of gifted/talented education is to provide the students with a continuous educational program that is comprehensive and articulated across grade levels and disciplines.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue	**Using off-grade-level textbooks and resources for gifted/ talented students.**
2. Some Thoughts	It is recognized that the needs, interests, and abilities of gifted/talented students require more advanced and complex subject matter. This material is often located in texts and other resources assigned to grade levels beyond the one actually designated for the student. Too often, learning for gifted students is hampered because the use of texts beyond the students' assigned grade level is prohibited. Sometimes teachers of the gifted/talented are reluctant to select the appropriate materials for fear their colleagues will perceive the use of out-of-grade-level material as an encroachment on their courses of study.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue	**Training teachers to teach gifted/talented students.**
2. Some Thoughts	While it is assumed that specific training is a necessary prerequisite for teaching the gifted/talented, there is not agreement on what this training should include or how it should be provided. It is agreed that all teachers need to comprehend and have skills related to the nature and needs of the gifted/talented. Every district should have expectations for and an outline to describe how teachers can obtain the necessary training. This material should be a part of personnel procedures. The planning of teacher training experiences should include consideration of both district and university resources and personnel. Specific competencies should be defined and resources matched to the attainment of these competencies. A randomly scheduled set of inservice meetings that relate to a potpourri of topics during the school year rather than a focused set of competency-based inservices can have limited effects in meeting the needs of teachers of the gifted/talented.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue	**Assigning teachers for the gifted/talented program.**
2. Some Thoughts	The procedures and criteria used to select and assign teachers to the gifted/talented program should be a matter of public information. Too often, teachers are assigned surreptitiously to teach the gifted/talented. Some educators are designated as teachers of the gifted/talented as either a reward or a punishment. In some cases, teachers are given such assignments to facilitate the administration of the school. There is a need to establish standards, not only for the selection and appointment of teachers of the gifted/talented, but also for the evaluation of these teachers. It is important to assess the teachers' roles and responsibilities to provide appropriately and adequately for gifted/talented students and to support the gifted program with integrity.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue	**Dismissing or removing students from the gifted/talented program.**
2. Some Thoughts	Dismissing students from the gifted/talented program should be conceptualized as "counseling out" a child from the program or suggesting a "change in placement." Dismissal should include a discussion with the child and parent, presentation of documentation to substantiate the decisions affecting the child, and provisions of appropriate alternatives for the student. Reasons for the dismissal or removal of a student from the gifted program should be explained in both global and specific terms, e.g., lack of achievement because _____, or inappropriate identification due to _____. The dismissal report should be filed in the appropriate manner and include a time for reconsideration by parents and the student.

3. Implications	
Positive	**Negative**

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline		
Person Responsible	**Task**	**Date**

1. The Issue	**Obtaining high school or college credit for attending advanced courses at other institutions.**
2. Some Thoughts	A lack of articulation between educational divisions or agencies can result in the denial of appropriate credit to the gifted/talented student who has participated in special educational opportunities. For example, gifted/talented students who take college courses while in high school may be told that such courses do not count toward graduation requirements. Therefore, a student who has advanced abilities is often penalized rather than rewarded for taking these extra and/or advanced courses at other institutions either during the school year or the summer months.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue	**Providing a continuous and accessible identification process.**
2. Some Thoughts	Often people feel that a student has only one opportunity to be nominated and identified as a gifted/talented individual. Parents, students, teachers, psychologists, and administrators should be aware of the information pertaining to the identification process and how and when they can initiate identification procedures. The nature and type of information for the identification process should be available to parents and students. Everyone involved with the child will need assistance to understand what and when to tell the child who has or has not been identified as a gifted/talented individual. This should be an integral feature of the total identification plan.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue	**Discriminating against underachievers.**
2. Some thoughts	The acceptable qualification for participation in the gifted program is the student's identification as a gifted/talented individual. In some cases gifted/talented students are required to provide evidence of academic achievement or scholarship (grade point average or a particular grade) and/or motivation to perform in accord with one's potential in order to continue in the gifted/talented program or in those activities and/or classes designated as part of the gifted/talented program. For some gifted/talented students, the additional criteria required to participate in the gifted/talented program disables them from participating in the very program for which they were originally identified. The imposition of such criteria enables teachers to "excuse" from the program a student who is gifted/talented but who is more difficult to teach. Of importance is the determination of who has the responsibility to motivate and teach underachieving gifted/talented students those study habits and skills that will allow them to participate effectively in a gifted/talented program.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue	**Punishing students for their participation in the extra or "pull-out" classes of a gifted/talented program.**
2. Some Thoughts	Many students participate in gifted/talented programs that are designed to take place outside of the regular classroom. Such extra-classroom program prototypes include the Resource Room, itinerant teacher model, seminar classes, etc. While the student's attendance at these programs is a legitimate excused absence from their regular classroom program, too often, students are required to make up what they have missed during their absence from the regular classroom. They are penalized by teachers and peers for attending the gifted/talented program. Policies affecting the rights of other students who have special needs that are met outside the regular classroom should apply as well to gifted/talented students.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue	**Assigning homework to the gifted/talented.**
2. Some Thoughts	The concept of academic rigor and the development of scholarship are associated with the need for and quantity of homework. Some educators arbitrarily state that success in their particular class is dependent on the hours of required homework per evening. Gifted/talented students recognize the lack of time needed to give to the demands of homework related to different subjects or teachers. Consequently, the gifted/talented student often feels overburdened and overwhelmed. Many gifted/talented students withdraw from the program or are "taught" to be underachievers in order to unschackle themselves from the burden of too much homework.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue	**Overscheduling gifted/talented students.**
2. Some Thoughts	The multi-faceted abilities of gifted/talented students often enable them to participate in a variety of school-related activities. It is not uncommon to have these students as members of the drama club, debate team, athletic team, and Student Council. Both the activities and the range of the students' own interests vie for their attention. Often these students are encouraged by adults to take part in activities from which they could benefit, but for which they have little time to participate.

3. Implications

Positive	Negative

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline

Person Responsible	Task	Date

1. The Issue 2. Some Thoughts	

3. Implications	
Positive	**Negative**

4. Suggested Policy

5. Needs

6. Timeline		
Person Responsible	**Task**	**Date**